

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

RECEIVED

1. Name

historic Northern National Bank

DEC 30 1981

and/or common

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

2. Location

street & number 2300 Germantown Avenue

not for publication

city, town Philadelphia

vicinity of

congressional district

state Pennsylvania

code

county Philadelphia

code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Ile-Ife Center for the Arts and Humanities/Arthur Hall Afro American Dance Ensemble

street & number 2544 Germantown Avenue

city, town Philadelphia

vicinity of

state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Hall Office of Records

street & number Broad and Market Streets

city, town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Philadelphia Historical Commission Register

has this property been determined eligible? ... yes no

date November 1974

___ federal ___ state ___ county local

depository for survey records Philadelphia Historical Commission

city, town Philadelphia

state Pa

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Northern National Bank, 2300 Germantown Avenue, stands as a two story flat-iron building occupying the corner of a six-way intersection in North Philadelphia. The brick and stone bank has a grand arched entranceway where the building wraps around the corner. The building stretches five bays along Dauphin Street and two finished bays along Germantown Avenue. A rusticated pink granite base supports the bank's walls of yellow Roman brick. The building is decorated with an assortment of terra cotta and pressed metal details.

The bank's rounded corner receives the most lavish design treatment. A cascade of pink granite steps leads up to the arched doorway. The door surround, composed of two sets of short polished granite columns, supports a wide arch of terra cotta voisoirs with a projecting keystone. A set of ornate wrought iron gates protects the entranceway. The doorway is flanked by two elaborately decorated terra cotta buttresses and two terra cotta cartouches giving the dates the bank was founded and erected. Above the doorway the second story contains three small arched windows set against a background of terra cotta diaperwork. A pressed tin crest sits on the cornice above the doorway.

The Dauphin Street facade contains five bays. The bays include three two-story arched window registers closest to the corner and two additional bays with separate rectangular windows on each floor toward the rear of the building. The two story arched window registers contain 1/1 wooden sash windows on the first floor and single pane windows with arched transoms on the second floor. Pierced tin spandrels and cast iron window grates further adorn the windows. In the last two bays, the first and second story windows are separate, each having their own terra cotta window frame. The second floor windows are set into a panel of terra cotta diaperwork.

The Germantown Avenue facade contains two arched bays identical to those on Dauphin Street and a large unfinished wall section originally hidden from view.

The building has a low hipped standing seam metal roof and a heavy-modillioned pressed metal cornice.

The bank contains an intact 19th century interior. The banking floor is an open two story space with marble counters and tellers cages made of brass and frosted glass. The floor is overlooked by a wrought-iron gallery and the bank president's office. This office has unusual parquet floors and wooden panelling. The enormous vault attests to the building's historic function.

The Northern National Bank remains a remarkably intact example of an ornate late 19th century neighborhood financial institution.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1893

Builder/Architect Walter D. Smedley

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Northern National Bank, 2300 Germantown Avenue, possesses significance as a fine example of a Romanesque Revival bank designed in 1893 by Philadelphia architect Walter D. Smedley. In addition, the bank played a significant role in the North Philadelphia community as the only bank within a ten block radius of Germantown Avenue and Dauphin Street.

The architecture of the Northern National Bank expresses both the decorative exuberance of the Victorian era and the solid image the bank wished to convey to its customers. Architect Walter Smedley, creatively interpreting the Romanesque Revival style introduced a few years earlier by H.H. Richardson in Boston, used elements such as wide arched windows and doorway, a heavy rusticated base and a variety of deeply colored material to achieve an orchestrated decorative effect. The placement of the doorway at the corner of the flat-iron building follows a common pattern of the time, and serves as effective advertising as well as decoration for the bank.

Smedley's elaborate interior design is particularly significant because it is one of the few intact 19th-century bank interiors in Philadelphia. The open banking floor contains a marble tellers counter with a brass cage and frosted glass windows. The floor is overlooked by the bank president's office and a cast-iron balcony running the perimeter of the walls. Other important original details include the wood panelling in the president's office and the enormous vault.

Walter D. Smedley (1862-1939), the architect of the Northern National Bank, born in Philadelphia, attended drawing school at the Franklin Institute in 1880-81 and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1883, before apprenticing with the firm of Addison Hutton. Smedley opened his own firm in 1890, but continued his relationship with Hutton, having office space in the same building. Most of Smedley's commissions were grand residences located in Philadelphia suburbs, particularly the planned residential community of Wynnefield. He also designed the Town Hall in Media (Pa.) and the Delaware County (Pa.) Prison. The Smedley building most similar to the Northern National Bank is the West Philadelphia Title and Trust company of 1897. This building incorporates similar elements such as the flat-iron shape, the Romanesque Revival arched windows and terra cotta trim. The Northern National Bank stands as one of Smedley's finest commercial buildings.

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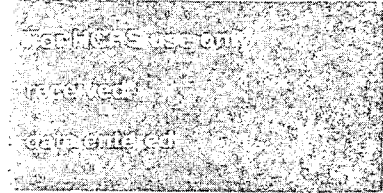
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Northern National Bank, Philadelphia PA.

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 2



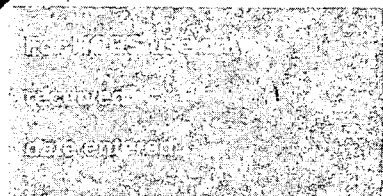
In 1890, the Northern National Bank was founded in a row house at 2122 Germantown Avenue in North Philadelphia. The surrounding neighborhood, which developed between 1875-1885, consisted of an established mix of factories and workers' row houses. The Northern National Bank was the first and only bank to locate in this area in the 19th century. Edward T. Tyson, a real estate broker, founded the bank in 1890 and became its acting president. Three brick row houses in the 2100 block of Germantown Avenue served as Mr. Tyson's home, his office, as well as the branch of the bank. The bank was so successful that they were able to erect this substantial building in 1893, a depressed year in which over 500 banks closed around the country.

In 1929, the Northern National Bank merged with the Ninth National Bank, but continued to operate from the same location under the new name. The building remained a branch of the bank until its merger with the Philadelphia National Bank in 1951. The building operated as the Philadelphia National Bank until 1971, when it was sold for \$1 to the Ile-Ife Black Humanitarian Center.

The Northern National Bank is significant as an exuberant example of the work of Walter D. Smedley and the Romanesque style; as one of the very few intact 19th-century interiors in Philadelphia; and lastly as the sole building of the Northern National Bank, an important 19th-century institution in this section of Philadelphia.

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Northern National Bank, Philadelphia PA. Item number 9
Continuation sheet Bibliography

Page 2

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to
the Styles. (MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1969)
Walter D. Smedley. Collection at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Northern National Bank, Philadelphia PA

Continuation sheet Geographical Data

Item number 10

Page 2

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date entered

minutes West along the said Southwesterly side of Germantown Avenue one hundred feet five and one quarter inches to a point; thence extending Southwesterly on a line at right angles to said Germantown Avenue forty-eight feet six and three-quarter inches to a point; thence extending Southwesterly on a line at right angles to said Dauphin Street forty-eight feet six and three-quarter inches to the Southwesterly side of said Germantown Avenue and the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Boyd's City Directory 1888-1895
Moody's Banks and Insurance Manual 1929
Smedley, Atlases 1862-1895
(see attached sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Philadelphia

Quadrangle scale 1:25000

UMT References

A

1	8	7	5	3	0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

B

Zone	Easting		Northing		

C

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D

--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at a point a corner situate on the Southwesterly side of Germantown Avenue and the Northerly side of Dauphin Street in the Thirty-seventh Ward of the City of Philadelphia, thence extending North Twenty-seven degrees three

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N / A	code	county	code
	N/A			

state	N/A	code	county	code
	N/A			

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Willoughby/Randal Baron

organization Philadelphia Historical Commission date December 17, 1984

street & number 1313 City Hall Annex

telephone 215-686-4543

city or town Philadelphia

state Pa

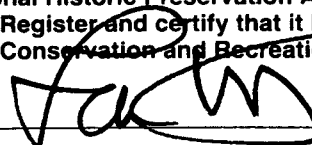
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5/4/85

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

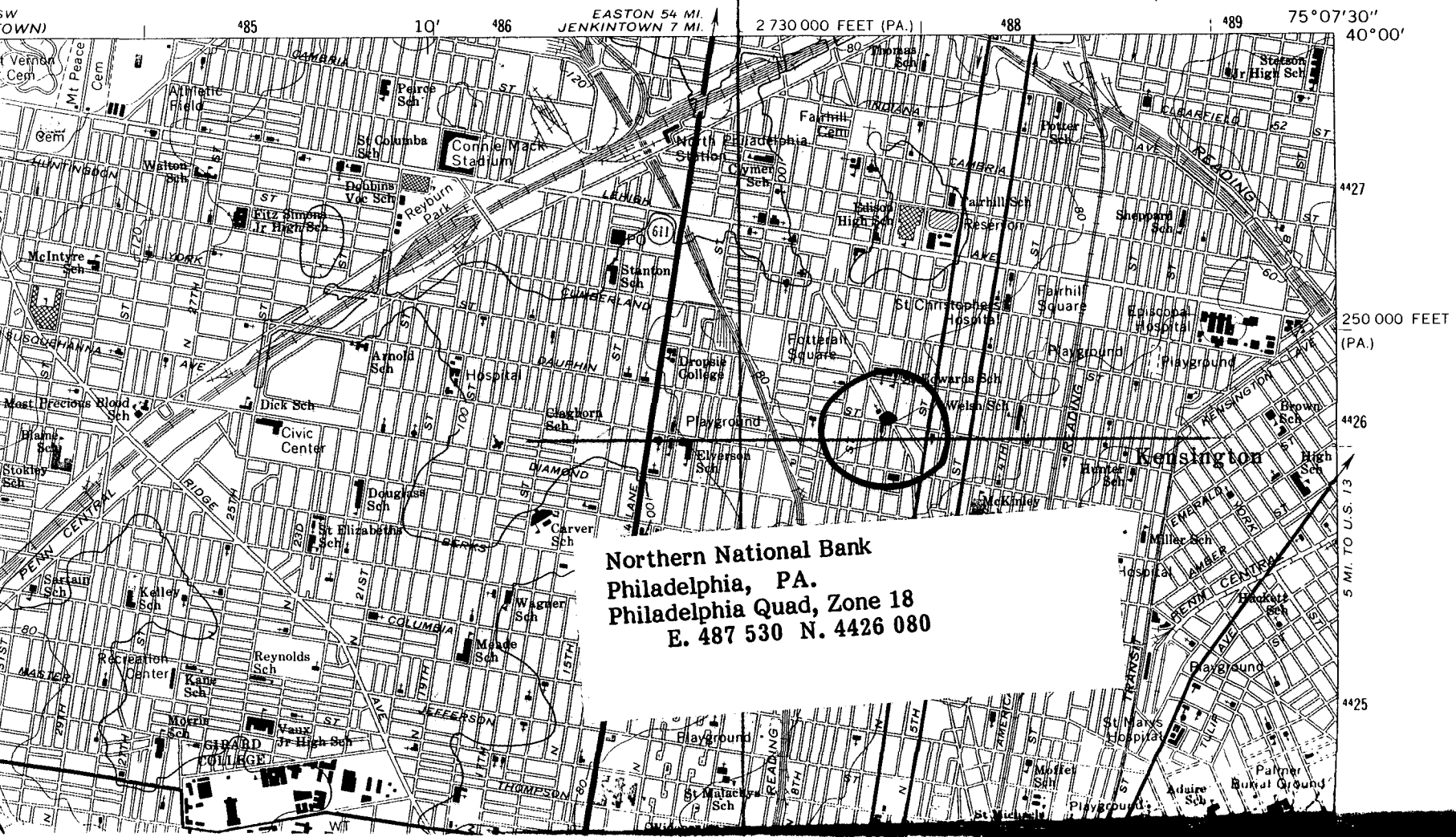
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

PHILADELPHIA QUADRANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA-NEW JERSEY
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5964 II SE
(FRANKFORD)



Northern National Bank
Philadelphia, PA.
Philadelphia Quad, Zone 18
E. 487 530 N. 4426 080